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California weather stays on dry side

BY DALE KASLER
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California’s alarmingly dry winter continues, with no meaningful snow or rain in sight. Although it’s far too soon to predict a drought, experts said wildfire risks could worsen this summer as a result of the shortage of precipitation.

And while the rainy season still has more than two months left, a persistent high-pressure ridge over the Pacific is keeping wet weather at bay, just as it did during the five-year drought, said Daniel Swain, a climate scientist at UCLA. Swain said it’s possible parts of Northern California “could go completely dry in the month of February.”

Private weather forecaster Jan Null said there’s only a 15 percent chance of precipitation levels hitting normal levels. “That’s not where I’m going to put my money on the table,” said Null, founder of Golden Gate Weather Services in Half Moon Bay.

Two weeks after the latest rains fell in Sacramento and many other cities, the short-term forecast calls for more dry weather. As it is, Sacramento’s winter has been 46 percent drier than normal, while Fresno has been 45 percent drier.

Sacramento could be heading into record territory: So far the city hasn’t received any rain in February, a month that normally sees 3.69 inches. The driest February in recorded history in Sacramento saw 0.04 inches of rain, according to Michelle Mead of the National Weather Service.

Fresno hasn’t seen any rain this month, either. The same with Merced.

The Sierra Nevada snowpack is 40 percent below normal. The Department of Water Resource’s eight-station index for the northern Sierra, a closely-watched gauge of precipitation in the mountains and foothills, is 42 percent below normal.

California’s saving grace: It generally takes multiple dry winters to create a drought. Last winter was unusually wet, and there’s still plenty of water in Folsom Lake, Shasta Lake and other major state reservoirs. That should help California muddle through the summer and fall, when the rain totally shuts off and the state has to rely exclusively on water stored

SEE WEATHER, 4A

2020 ELECTION

Sanders holds narrow lead as NH culls field



ANDREW HARNIK AP

New Hampshire primary voters wait for their voting precinct to open Tuesday morning outside Parker-Varney Elementary School in Manchester, N.H.

BY STEVE PEOPLES, KATHLEEN RONAYNE, THOMAS BEAUMONT AND HUNTER WOODALL
Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H.

Fiery progressive Bernie Sanders fought for Democratic front-runner status Tuesday night as New Hampshire’s first-in-the-nation primary began to cull the crowded field, bringing at least some clarity to a presidential nomination fight marred so far by dysfunction and doubt.

Sanders held a small lead over Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar as results were coming in. Elizabeth Warren and Joe Biden were vying for fourth, and neither was on track to receive any delegates.

As Sanders predicted victory, Buttigieg and Klobuchar fought for an edge with their party’s establishment with a strong finish. Warren and Biden wanted to avert political disaster, with Biden leaving the state hours before the final polls closed.

New Hampshire began narrowing the Democrats’ unwieldy 2020 class even before the final results were known. Political newcomer Andrew Yang, having attracted a small but loyal following over the past year, was suspending his campaign. He was one of just three ethnic minorities left in the race.

Also out: Colorado Sen. Michael Bennet, who ran as a just-the-facts moderate in a race in which liberal candidates grabbed the headlines.

Sen. Warren, among the front-runners for months, was doing poorly in early results but told cheering supporters, “Our campaign is built for the long haul, and we are just getting started.”

She said Sanders and Buttigieg are “both great candidates,” and congratulated “my friend and colleague” Klobuchar who was having her strongest night so far.

Still, nine candidates remained in the competition for the chance to take on Presi-

dent Donald Trump this fall. Tuesday’s contest comes just eight days after Iowa caucuses injected chaos into the race and failed to report a clear winner.

While the action was on the Democratic side, Trump easily won New Hampshire’s Republican primary. He was facing token opposition from former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld.

New Hampshire Democrats headed into Tuesday’s primary with a focus on matters of fairness.

Just over 1 in 10 said they were “very confident” that their party’s process for choosing a presidential nominee was fair, according to a wide-ranging AP VoteCast survey.

At the same time, nearly 8 in 10 also viewed the economy as unfair, although there was little consensus on which candidate would do the best job of stewarding the world’s largest economy.

For Sanders, the New Hampshire primary was an opportunity to build on his

dominance of the party’s left flank.

A repeat of his strong showing in Iowa could severely damage progressive rival Warren, who faced the prospect of an embarrassing defeat in a state that borders her home of Massachusetts.

While Sanders marches forward, moderates are struggling to unite behind a candidate. After essentially tying with Sanders for first place in Iowa, Buttigieg, the 38-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, began his day as the centrist front-runner. But Klobuchar was mounting a spirited bid for the same voters.

Having already predicted he would “take a hit” in New Hampshire after a distant fourth-place finish in Iowa, Biden was essentially ceding the state.

He was traveling to South Carolina Tuesday as he bet his candidacy on a strong showing there later this month boosted by support from black voters.

Anti-vaccine families head to Idaho

BY AUDREY DUTTON
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Shalee Brindley and her husband were ready to leave the Bay Area. They couldn’t afford to buy a home for their family — and with their daughter approaching school age, Brindley felt a looming deadline to leave California.

California law requires childhood immunizations for almost all students. Brindley didn’t plan to vaccinate her child.

As the couple searched for a new state to call home in 2017, Idaho’s vaccine laws sealed the

deal. In Idaho, Brindley wouldn’t need a doctor to sign off on a medical exemption for her daughter. She needed only to submit a form saying she chose not to vaccinate.

“I’m a mother. And I’m also a California refugee,” Brindley, a Meridian resident, said at a hearing in Boise in August 2019. “I came here in search of medical freedom.”

Brindley was one of more than two dozen people who told state officials last summer that they moved to Idaho because of the state’s limited regulation — specifically, the ease of getting a vaccine exemption for school-

children.

They said vaccine mandates take away a parent’s right to make medical decisions for their children, and they voiced concerns about vaccine safety.

Several people who testified at hearings or via email described themselves as a “refugee” of their former state.

They urged lawmakers and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare not to change Idaho’s permissive rules. Neighboring states like California and Washington have tightened the rules for vaccine exemptions in response to outbreaks of diseases like the measles.

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I’M A MOTHER. AND I’M ALSO A CALIFORNIA REFUGEE. I CAME HERE IN SEARCH OF MEDICAL FREEDOM.

Shalee Brindley, who now lives in Idaho

The Idaho Legislature last month voted to keep Idaho’s existing rules, according to Idaho Education News. Legislators narrowly voted to keep the meningitis vaccine on a list of immunizations for high schoolers.

CALIFORNIA, OTHER STATES NOW REQUIRE VACCINES

Idaho’s laws for childhood

immunizations are among the most lax in the country. It is one of 15 states that allow vaccine exemptions based on a personal belief — not just for medical or religious reasons.

Washington, too, is among those 15. But last year, that state removed the exemption for the “MMR” shot, a vaccine against

SEE ANTI-VACCINE, 6A

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